



Discovering what members actually expect of the Federation

By Tony O'Shea
Chairman

As foreshadowed in the previous issue of this newsletter, it is my intention to commence as soon as practicable a program of personal visits to our member Co-operatives.

I have discussed this matter with several Chairmen and CEOs at the recent Monash Agribusiness Co-operative Leaders Forum at Cape Schanck, and made tentative arrangements to visit them.

What I have in mind is for me to arrange visits to coincide with your Board Meeting days and to arrive early enough in the day to enable me to meet with your CEO or equivalent prior to meeting with the Board, or vice-versa, whichever is more practical to suit our mutual convenience.

The major motivation behind these visits is "Market Research" on behalf of the Federation. I believe that I need to discover what members actually expect of the Federation. Without that knowledge we have little hope of providing whatever it is that you expect of us!

It is very disappointing that such a small percentage of Co-ops registered in Victoria see fit to join the Federation. I drew some slight degree of consolation from the discovery that other State Federations have similarly small membership, but they are able to do more partly because their

member co-ops pay significantly higher annual subscriptions. I learned this during my attendance at the recent AGM and two-day Conference of the Co-operative Federation of N.S.W. Ltd in Sydney.

When I have completed my visits to a sufficiently large proportion of our Victorian Federation members to give me a picture of their overall expectations, I hope to make some recommendations to our Federation Board re possible changes to the way we operate.

Another task I hope to complete during my visits to members is to compile a list of names of potential directors of the Federation. Many of our readers will be only too familiar with the difficulties facing your co-operative in finding and training suitable candidates for its own Board. To have any chance of re-vitalising the Co-op Movement in this State we need dynamic Directors on the Federation Board who really believe in the benefits of co-operation and are prepared to work constructively towards promoting them.

I suspect that I have already written more than our Editor really envisaged providing space for, so had better finish for now with best wishes for the festive season ahead and a happy and prosperous New Year to you all.

The tortoise race to change co-operative legislation

On 1 November 2002 representatives of co-operative federations met to discuss the status of co-operative legislation throughout Australia:

Tony O'Shea, Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd

David Griffiths, Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd

John Booth, Co-operative Federation of WA Ltd

Helen McCall, Co-operative Federation of N.S.W. Ltd

The meeting was held at the offices of the Australian National Credit Union at 600 Collins Street, Melbourne.

The States have agreed to two major changes to co-operative legislation - capital rais-

ing units and mutual recognition.

The N.S.W. Registry has responsibility for preparing the legislative drafts.

The draft should be ready this December.

It was agreed that it was important for each Federation to lobby their respective state governments to facilitate the process and, therefore, the necessary legislative changes.

It is hoped that a meeting of the Australian Co-operative Council will be convened early in 2003 to further progress on the changes.

Board Choices and Co-operative Voices

Co-operatives are encouraged to consider nominations to the board of the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd.

There is one vacancy on the board.

Chairman Tony O'Shea would be interested to speak with eligible and interested candidates.

Under CFV's Rules, the board will decide who to co-opt.

The successful applicant will serve until the next AGM.

Interested applicants should obtain a copy of The Co-operative Advantage Developing Directors of Co-operatives Kit.

<http://www.australia.coop>

The CFV's web site was launched on 30 November 2002.

The web site will be a portal for the co-operative movement.

The web site has eight major categories:

Co-op Case Studies

Co-op Education

Co-op Federations

Co-op Formation

Co-op History

Co-op Legislation

Co-op Publications

Co-op Workshops

Members are asked to check the web site regularly. Under Co-op Federations, members can access AGM reports and minutes, submissions and letters to the media.

Submissions include a recent one to the Independent Review of Soccer arguing for member ownership and control of soccer clubs and the governing body.

Co-op Education

Co-operative Education and Development Manager, Graeme Charles, has been helping the Smart Timber co-operative develop a business plan.

He has also been assisting the formation of an Inglewood fuel co-operative

Graeme has also been actively working with the "Our Energy" aggregation initiative in North East Victoria. Over 5000 local consumers have joined.

The most recent letter to the editor, for example, was published in The Weekly Times on the issue arising from the demutualisation of Pivot.

Members are also asked to refer intending co-operators and co-operatives to the Co-op Formation section of <http://www.australia.coop>

The site is an invaluable source of information on the co-operative option. The section Co-op Formation, for example, includes three critical papers:

The Formation Decision - deciding whether or not to establish a co-operative.

The Formation Process - the process involved in forming a co-operative.

The Post Formation Consequences - how to maintain the co-operative nature and character of co-operatives.

The death of National Co-op Update

By David Griffiths

National Co-op Update has ceased publication.

NCU began publishing in 1995 and the last issue was published in August 2002.

NCU was a tremendous initiative for the co-operative movement by Chris Greenwood and his colleagues at Substitution Pty Ltd.

Unfortunately, Australia's co-operative movement failed to support NCU.

Trades Practices Reform Campaign

By David Griffiths

The current controversy over who will succeed Alan Fels as Chairman of the ACCC is overshadowing the fundamental issue of the nature of the trade practices legislation.

Following a meeting with the Trade Practices Review Committee, the board of CFV has committed to campaigning for changed legislation.

The Trade Practices Review was expected to report to the Federal Government in November 2002.

It is unclear, however, when the Federal Government will release the report and whether the Government will release the report with its response to the recommendations and/or

seek reaction to the report and/or a proposed government response.

An information kit is being prepared for the campaign.

The kit will include submissions from the N.S.W. and Victorian Federations, the CFV's Member Benefit and .coop brochures and the ILO's Recommendation on the Promotion of Co-operatives.

The priority target for the campaign will be Commonwealth and State politicians to build-up an understanding of the co-operative option and support for co-operative neutral changes to the legislation.

Co-operative Tour

CFV Secretary David Griffiths organised a co-operative tour on 4 November 2002 following the Monash Agribusiness Seminar.

The tour included visits to Bonlac Foods Darnum plant, the Gippsland Herd Improvement Co-operative Ltd and a robotic milking plant in Gippsland.

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every effort has been made to ensure the information in this newsletter is correct. No responsibility is accepted for loss or other consequences which may arise acting or refraining from acting as a result of this material.

CO-OP BROCHURES

MEMBER BENEFIT

DOTCOOP

By David Griffiths

Two new co-op brochures have been published by the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd - Member Benefit and .coop.

Publication of the brochures was supported by a grant from Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria.

The .coop brochure will be mailed to all members with this issue of VCN.

The .coop brochure outlines the history and rationale for .coop and the role and scope of australia.coop

Co-operatives are encouraged to register .coop domain names - establishing and maintaining the co-operative difference within the internet.

The Member Benefit brochure outlines the services of CFV and includes the mission and objectives:

Co-op Advocacy
Co-op Aggregation
Co-op Education
Co-op Formation
australia.coop
Co-op Management
Co-op Publications
Co-op Videos
Co-op Library

Both brochures will be used to promote the CFV and used for two kits:

The Trade Practices Act Reform Kit
The Membership Kit

CO-OP PUBLICATIONS

The Co-operative Start-Up Manual

An invaluable source of information for those interested in deciding whether or not to establish a co-operative and the process for establishment and development.

Print and electronic versions available.

The Co-op Advantage Developing Directors of Co-ops Kit

The unique and different roles and responsibilities of co-operative directors.

Print and electronic copies are available.

Member Benefit

Outlines the role and services of the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd.

.Coop

Outlines the history of and role for .coop and what the role of australia.coop with a summary of the site's features. An electronic copy is available on the web site.

Co-operation A to Z

The A to Z of Co-operation. Print and electronic copies available.

For copies and pricing contact the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd, 71 Franciscan Avenue, Frankston VIC 3199 Telephone: 9785 6704 Facsimile: 9785 6542

Email: cfedv@impaq.com.au

Web site:

<http://www.australia.coop>

australia.coop update

Most recent additions to <http://www.australia.coop>

Letter to The Weekly Times on the demutualisation of Pivot

Electronic copies of the two new CFV brochures - Member Benefit and .coop

Copy of the CFV submission to the Independent Soccer Review

Minutes of the AGM of 16 October 2002